

President Thanks Service Members for Efforts in War on Terrorism

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample, USA American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, May 15, 2004 — President Bush used his weekly national radio address to applaud the efforts of service members on Armed Forces Day. The president credited the U.S. military with keeping terrorists across the world on the run, helping the people of Afghanistan and Iraq to build democratic societies, and making America more secure during his address today. “By their example, the people of those countries and of the countries around the world are coming to know that freedom is the answer to hopelessness and terror,” he said. “Our servicemen and women are defending America with unselfish courage, and their achievements have brought pride and credit to this nation.” Bush commented again on the Iraqi detainee abuse issue, noting that “all Americans know that the actions of a few do not reflect the true character of the United States armed forces.” “Our country has great respect for the Iraqi people, and we are determined to expose and punish the abuse of Iraqi detainees.” He pointed out that court-martial charges have been filed against seven soldiers involved in the Abu Ghraib abuse incident. He said the first trial is set to begin next week, and that his administration and the military

are determined that such abuses never happen again. Bush said that he was sickened by the public execution of American civilian Nick Berg in Iraq. A May 11 video posted on a Web site showed Berg, described as a 26-year-old independent contractor from West Chester, Pa., being decapitated. His killers claimed to be acting in revenge for the abuse of Iraqis at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad. Bush earlier in the week had called the grisly, videotaped execution — reportedly by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi — an unjustified act on “an innocent civilian who was in Iraq to help build a free Iraq.” Zarqawi, with ties to al Qaeda, is the leader of an Islamic terrorist group that has claimed responsibility for attacks on coalition forces in Iraq. “The savage execution of this innocent man reminds us of the true nature of our terrorist enemy, and of the stakes in this struggle,” the president said today. And for that reason, Bush told listeners there is only one way to deal with terror: “We must confront the enemy and stay on the offensive until these killers are defeated,” he said. “And this is precisely what our armed forces, and the forces of our coalition, are doing.” During his address the president updated what the U.S. military is doing in Iraq. He noted that in and around Fallujah, U.S. Marines are

conducting joint patrols with local Iraqis to “take back the city from Saddam loyalists and foreign fighters and other militants.” “In nearby towns, Marines are conducting raids to disrupt enemy attacks on supply routes and to root out anti-coalition fighters,” Bush said. Also the president pointed out that in and around the cities of Najaf and Karbala, U.S. soldiers and Iraqi security forces are “systematically dismantling” the illegal militia of radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Bush said the Iraqi people oppose the actions of Sadr’s illegal militia, adding that Shiia religious leaders have called on Sadr to withdraw. Meanwhile, the president vowed that the United States will continue to work with Iraqi leaders to build a free, democratic and independent government. He said that U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi is in Iraq consulting with Iraqi leaders, noting that in the next few weeks, “important decisions will be made on the makeup of an interim government.” The president also repeated his pledge to turn over sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30, telling listeners that, “America will keep its commitment to the independence and national dignity of the Iraqi people.” However, he added that security mission in Iraq by the U.S. military will continue on “July 1 and beyond.”

Armed Forces Day 2004 Message From the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

Today, we pause to honor the noble service of the men and women in America’s military. The threat of terrorism is great, but your willingness and ability to defeat the enemy are greater. Those serving in the Armed Forces of the United States of America stand between liberty and tyranny, as they have for over two centuries.

You have proven to the world that the United States and our allies seek not to conquer, but to defend

freedom, restore peace and create hope for a better future. On many fronts, in the United States and across the globe, you stepped forward when called and are making the world a safer place for all peace-loving people, regardless of race, creed, color or religion.

On the first Armed Forces Day in 1950, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Omar Bradley, said, “Sacrifice, not selfishness, must be the eternal price of liberty.” The

Joint Chiefs of Staff and I join all Americans in recognizing your selfless sacrifice, as well as that of your families. We appreciate your professionalism, character and sense of duty. You are leading the charge to make the world a better place, free from terror and fear.

May God bless our nation and the men and women in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Gen. Richard B. Myers, USAF